The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Senate Legislative Services. The keyword, summary, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

DIGEST

SB 307 Engrossed | 2026 Regular Session | Edmonds

Present law provides that the La. Legislature finds that:

(1) There is a need to educate and inform the public as to the history and background of American and Louisiana law.

(2) That America and Louisiana's religious history plays an important role in the background of our American and Louisiana law.

(3) The role of religion in the constitutional history of both America and Louisiana is acknowledged by historians.

(4) The basic knowledge of American legal history is important to the formation of civic virtue in our society.

(5) The courts have provided vital direction to the Legislature on how to approach the display of historical documents.

(6) A uniform, sound, distinct, and appropriate presentation of the story of the role of religion in the constitutional history of America and La. should be supported.

Proposed law retains present law and also adds the following additional legislative findings:

(7) In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court recognized that it is permissible to display the Ten Commandments on government property.

(8) In 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court further recognized that the Ten Commandments have historical significance as one of the foundations of our legal system and that displaying the Ten Commandments on public property may have multiple purposes, including historical significance and representing a common cultural heritage.

(9) The Mayflower Compact of 1620 was America's first written constitution and made a Covenant with Almighty God to "form a civil body politic". This was the first purely American document of self-government and affirmed the link between civil society and God.

(10) The Declaration of Independence, adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776, provides that all are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights,

including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

(11) The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a method of admitting new states to the Union from the territory as the country expanded to the Pacific and extended the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty to the territories and that religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government and the happiness of all and that schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

(12) The text of the Ten Commandments set forth in proposed law is identical to the text of the Ten Commandments monument that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005.

(13) It is the legislature's intent to apply the U.S. Supreme Court's 2005 decision to continue the rich tradition of displaying the Ten Commandments to ensure that all may understand and appreciate the foundational documents of our state and national government.

(14) The U.S. Supreme Court stated in 2006 that the Ten Commandments may be displayed on government property when a private donation is made for the purchase of the historical monument.

(15) It is the intention of the legislature that the Ten Commandments be printed, displayed, and made available to the agency free of charge.

Present law finds that the Legislature endorses the prolongation of a uniform, sound, distinct, and appropriate presentation of the story of the role of religion in the constitutional history of America and Louisiana, which may be publicly displayed in court houses and other state and local government buildings throughout the state.

Present law provides that public displays with acknowledged religious history may include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

(1) The Mayflower Compact, written and adopted in 1620.

(2) The Ten Commandments, as extracted from the Bible, Exodus Chapter 20.

(3) The Declaration of Independence, adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776.

(4) Articles I through VI of the Northwest Ordinance enacted by Congress on July 13, 1787, which prohibited slavery in the new territories and stated that "religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary for good government and the happiness of mankind."

Present law provides that the documents shall be accompanied by a document entitled "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History," which states that certain documents stand out as pivotal in the religious history of America and Louisiana legal system, among which are the Mayflower Compact, The Declaration of Independence as a legal foundation for the United States Constitution, the Ten Commandments as a foundation of our legal system, and the Northwest

Ordinance, which was a primary document affirming faith as a foundation of prohibiting slavery. Present law states that American law, constitutionalism, and political theory have deep roots in religion. American ideals about liberty, freedom, equality, legal responsibility and codes of law, to mention a few, have roots and underpinnings in religion.

Present law provides that the Ten Commandments, found in the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament of the Bible, was one of the earliest written expressions of law to be incorporated in American legal systems. Proposed law also provides that the Ten Commandments also impacted the Declaration of Independence, which refers to the "laws of nature and of Nature's God."

Present law states that the division of state archives and records service within the office of the secretary of state shall, upon request, prepare and distribute to state offices, clerks of court, judges and local governing authorities in the state, copies of the documents, suitable for framing and display, upon receipt of funds to reimburse the secretary for the actual cost of the preparation and delivery of the documents. Proposed law states that the state offices, clerks of court, judges and local government buildings are authorized to post the documents for display provided by the secretary in a visible public location along with other historical documents. Present law allows state offices, clerks of court, judges, and local governing authorities to reprint themselves the documents or to accept the donation of already printed documents for display.

Proposed law retains present law and requires the commissioner of administration to permit and arrange for the placement on the Louisiana State Capitol grounds of a suitable monument displaying the Ten Commandments. Proposed law further requires the commissioner to designate the location of the monument, which shall be among other monuments, and to oversee its installation. Proposed law also allows the commissioner to delegate his responsibilities in proposed law to the office of state buildings.

Proposed law provides that design, construction, placement, and maintenance of the monument shall be without cost to the state.

Proposed law requires the commissioner to consider proposals for the monument from private entities and to select the proposal for the monument that will be installed. Proposed law further requires him to consider the appropriateness of the proposed design, the demonstrated ability of the responsible entity to pay the costs associated with the monument, and any other factor. Proposed law further provides that the commissioner shall make such selection by Dec. 31, 2026, unless he has not received an acceptable proposal by that date, in which case he shall select the first acceptable proposal he receives after that date.

Proposed law provides that the overall dimensions of the monument shall not exceed six feet in height by four feet wide by four feet width and that the text on the monument shall be the same as that used on the monument at issue in the court case *Van Orden v. Perry*, which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled constitutional.

Present law provides relative to public displays regarding the religious history of American and La. law. Proposed law further provides that public displays of the Mayflower Compact, the Ten

Commandments, the Declaration of Independence, and Articles I through VI of the Northwest Ordinance shall be accompanied by a document entitled "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History". Proposed law also specifies the text to be included in this document.

Proposed law requires that the Ten Commandments monument include a plaque with the text of the "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History".

Effective August 1, 2026.

(Amends R.S. 25:1281, 1282(A), (B), and (C), and 1283; adds R.S. 49:150.1(J))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the original bill

1. Technical Amendments